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9 **UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT**
10 **CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**

11 JOHN HO, an individual

12 Plaintiff,

13 vs.

14 KATHERINE TSAI-KUNG CHANG, an
15 individual

16 Defendants.

Case No.: 8:23-cv-00282

COMPLAINT FOR

**(1) VIOLATION OF THE UNRUH
CIVIL RIGHTS ACT
(CALIFORNIA CIVIL CODE
§§ 51, 52);**

**(2) VIOLATIONS OF THE
AMERICANS WITH
DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990**

I.
SUMMARY

1. This is a civil rights action by plaintiff John Ho (“Plaintiff”) for discrimination at the building, structure, facility, complex, property, land, development, and/or surrounding business complex located 5545 Orangethorpe Ave, La Palma, CA 90623-1237, Orange County, where the business “Burger King” operates (the “Property”). Plaintiff frequents the area for dining, shopping and entertainment as he lives approximately 20 minutes from the Property. In this particular instance, Plaintiff desired to patronize the “Burger King” fast food restaurant located on the property.

2. Plaintiff seeks damages, injunctive and declaratory relief, attorney’s fees and costs pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. §§ 12101, et seq.) and related California statutes¹ against the owner of the property KATHERINE TSAI-KUNG CHANG, an individual company (“Defendant”).

II.
JURISDICTION

3. This Court has original jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1343 for ADA claims.

4. Supplemental jurisdiction for claims brought under parallel California law – arising from the same nucleus of operative facts – is predicated on 28 U.S.C § 1367.

5. Plaintiff’s claims are authorized by 28 U.S.C. §§ 2201 and 2202.

III.
VENUE

6. All actions complained of herein take place within the jurisdiction of the United States District Court, Central District of California, and venue is invoked

¹ Plaintiff is not currently asserting a cause of action under California Civil Code § 55, but may amend his complaint at a later time upon discovery of facts which give rise to such a claim.

1 pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b), (c)

2 **IV.**

3 **PARTIES**

4 **7.** On information and belief, Plaintiff alleges that Defendant is or was at
5 the time of the incident, the owner, operator, lessor and/or lessee of the Property, and
6 consist of a person (or persons), firm, company, and/or corporation.

7 **8.** Plaintiff is a T-12 paraplegic, and as a result is unable to walk or stand,
8 and thus requires a use of a wheelchair at all times when traveling in public. Plaintiff
9 is “physically disabled” as defined by all applicable California and United States laws,
10 and a member of the public whose rights are protected by these laws. Plaintiff is a
11 resident of Los Angeles County, California. Plaintiff is considered a high frequency
12 litigant as that term is defined in California Code of Civil Procedure § 425.55(b). In
13 the twelve months preceding the filing of this complaint, Plaintiff filed Thirteen (13)
14 other construction accessibility related claims (not including this one).

15 **V.**

16 **FACTS**

17 **9.** On December 8, 2022, Plaintiff patronized the Property. The Property is
18 a sales or retail establishment, open to the public, which is intended for nonresidential
19 use and whose operation affects commerce.

20 **10.** Plaintiff visited the Property and encountered barriers (both physical and
21 intangible) that interfered with – if not outright denied – Plaintiff’s ability to use and
22 enjoy the goods, services, privileges and accommodations offered at the facility. To
23 the extent known by Plaintiff, the barriers at the Property included, but are not limited
24 to the following:

- 25
- 26 a. Parking spaces designated as accessible and accompanying access aisles
27 have slopes and/or cross slopes that exceed 2.0%. Without a level
28 parking space, it is difficult for Plaintiff to unload/transfer from a vehicle

1 as his wheelchair rolls.

- 2 b. To access the sidewalks and stores, Plaintiff must traverse up a built-up
3 curb ramp that is too steep. To the extent that the curb ramp is intended
4 to be a ramp, it does not have the necessary railings for Plaintiff to safely
5 maneuver up and down.
- 6 c. Accessible parking spaces have faded pavement marking making it
7 difficult to discern whether such spaces are in fact intended to
8 accommodate persons with disabilities

9 **11.** These barriers to access are listed without prejudice to Plaintiff citing
10 additional barriers to access after inspection by Plaintiff's access consultant, per the
11 9th Circuits standing standards under *Doran v. 7-Eleven, Inc.* 524 F.3d 1034 (9th Cir.
12 2008). These barriers prevented Plaintiff from enjoying full and equal access to the
13 Property.

14 **12.** Plaintiff thus experienced difficulty and discomfort as a result of the
15 accessible barriers he encountered. Although he would like to return to the Property
16 to patronize the convenience store at the Property, he continues to be deterred from
17 visiting the Property because of the future threats of injury created by these barriers.
18 Plaintiff often frequents the area, at least four times a year as he lives close to the
19 Property and there is lots of stores and entertainment around the Property that he
20 frequents. Plaintiff would return to the Property once the barriers have been corrected
21 because the convenience store is located close to his home.

22 **13.** On information and belief, Plaintiff alleges that Defendant knew that
23 these elements and areas of the Property were inaccessible, violate state and federal
24 law, and interfere with (or deny) access to the physically disabled. Moreover,
25 Defendant has the financial resources to remove these barriers from the Property
26 (without much difficult or expense), and make the Property accessible to the
27 physically disabled. To date, however, the Defendant refuses to remove those
28

1 barriers.

2 **14.** On information and belief, Plaintiff alleges that at all relevant times,
3 Defendant has possessed and enjoyed sufficient control and authority to modify the
4 Property to remove impediments to wheelchair access and to comply with the
5 Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines and Title 24 regulations.
6 Defendant has not removed such impediments and have not modified the Property to
7 conform to accessibility standards.

8 **VI. FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION: VIOLATION OF CALIFORNIA LAW**
9 **INCLUDING: THE UNRUH ACT, CIVIL CODE §§ 51, 52 AND THE**
10 **AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT AS INCORPORATED BY CIVIL**
11 **CODE SECTION 51(f)**

12 15. Plaintiff incorporates the allegations contained in paragraphs 1 through
13 14 for this claim and incorporates them herein.

14 16. At all times relevant to this complaint, California Civil Code § 51 has
15 provided that physically disabled persons are free and equal citizens of the state,
16 regardless of disability or medical condition:

17 All persons within the jurisdiction of this state are free and equal, and
18 no matter what their sex, race, color, religion, ancestry, national
19 origin, disability, or medical condition are entitled to the full and
20 equal accommodations, advantages, facilities, privileges, or services
21 in all business establishments of every kind whatsoever. Cal. Civ.
22 Code § 51(b).

23 17. California Civil Code § 52 provides that the discrimination against
24 Plaintiff on the basis of his disabilities constitutes a violation of the anti-
25 discrimination provisions of §§ 51 and 52.

26 18. Defendant's discrimination constitutes a separate and distinct violation of
27 California Civil Code § 52 which provides that:
28

Whoever denies, aids or incites a denial, or makes any discrimination or distinction contrary to section 51, 51.5 or 51.6 is liable for each and every offense for the actual damages, and any amount that may be determined by a jury, or a court sitting without a jury, up to a maximum of three times the amount of actual damage but in no case less than four thousand dollars (\$4,000) and any attorney's fees that may be determined by the court in addition thereto, suffered by any person denied the rights provided in Section 51, 51.5 or 51.6.

19. Plaintiff continues to be deterred from visiting the Subject Property based upon the existence of the accessible barriers. In addition to the instance of discrimination occurring in December 2023, Plaintiff is entitled to \$4,000.00 in statutory damages for each additional occurrence of discrimination under California Civil Code § 52.

20. Any violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (as pled in the Third Cause of Action) constitutes a violation of California Civil Code § 51(f) thus independently justifying an award of damages and injunctive relief pursuant to California law. Per § 51(f), “[a] violation of the right of any individual under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 ... shall also constitute a violation of this section.”

21. The actions and omissions of Defendant as herein alleged constitute a denial of access to and use of the described public facilities by physically disabled persons within the meaning of California Civil Code §§ 51 and 52. As a proximate result of Defendant's action and omissions Defendant has discriminated against Plaintiff in a violation of Civil Code §§ 51 and 51.

VII.

**SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION: VIOLATION OF THE AMERICANS WITH
DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990 (42 USC §§ 12101 *et seq.*)**

1 22. Plaintiff incorporates the allegations contained in paragraphs 1 through
2 21 for this claim and incorporates them herein.

3 23. As part of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (“ADA”),
4 Congress passed “Title III – Public Accommodations and Services Operated by
5 Private Entities.” 42 U.S.C. § 12181 et seq. The Property is one of the “private
6 entities” which are considered “public accommodations” for purposes of this title,
7 which includes any “restaurant, bar, or other sales or rental establishment serving food
8 or drink.” § 301(7)(B).

9 24. The ADA states that “[n]o individual shall be discriminated against on
10 the basis of disability in the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities,
11 privileges, advantages, or accommodations of any place of public accommodation by
12 any person who owns, leases, or leases to, or operates a place of public
13 accommodation.” 42 U.S.C. § 12182.

14 25. The acts and omissions of Defendant set forth herein were in violation of
15 Plaintiff’s rights under the ADA and the regulations promulgated thereunder, 28 CFR
16 Part 36 *et seq.*

17 26. On information and belief, Plaintiff alleges that the Property was
18 constructed or altered after January 26, 1993 thus triggering requirements for removal
19 of barriers to access for disabled persons under § 303 of the ADA. Further on
20 information and belief, Plaintiff alleges that removal of each of the barriers
21 complained of by Plaintiff as hereinabove alleged, were at all times herein mentioned
22 “readily achievable” under the standards §§ 301 and 302 of the ADA. As noted
23 hereinabove, removal of each and every one of the architectural barriers complained
24 of herein were also required under California law. In the event that removal of any
25 barrier is found to be “not readily achievable,” Defendant still violated the ADA, per §
26 302(b)(2)(A)(v) by failing to provide all goods, services, privileges, advantages and
27 accommodations through alternative methods that were readily achievable.
28

1 27. On information and belief, as of the date of Plaintiff's encounter at the
2 Property and as of the filing of this Complaint, the Defendant denies and continues to
3 deny full and equal access to Plaintiff and to other disabled persons, including
4 wheelchair users, in other respects, which violate plaintiff's rights to full and equal
5 access and which discriminate against Plaintiff on the basis of his disability, thus
6 wrongfully denying to plaintiff the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services,
7 facilities, privileges, advantages and accommodations, in violation of §§ 302 and 303
8 of the ADA. 42 USC §§ 12182 and 12183.

9 28. On information and belief, Defendant has continued to violate the law
10 and deny the rights of Plaintiff and other disabled persons to access this public
11 accommodation since on or before Plaintiff's encounters, as previously noted.
12 Pursuant to the ADA, § 308, 42 USC 12188 *et seq.*, Plaintiff is entitled to the
13 remedies and procedures set forth in § 204(a) of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 USC
14 2000(a)-3(a), as Plaintiff is being subjected to discrimination on the basis of disability
15 in violation of the ADA or has reasonable grounds for believing that he is about to be
16 subjected to discrimination. Pursuant to § 308(a)(2), "In cases of violations of § 302(b)
17)(2)(A)(iv) and § 303(a) ... injunctive relief shall include an order to alter facilities to
18 make such facilities readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities to
19 the extent required by this title."

20 29. Plaintiff seeks relief pursuant to remedies set forth in § 204(a) of the Civil
21 Rights Act of 1964, 42 USC 2000(a)-3(a), and pursuant to Federal Regulations
22 adopted to implement the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Plaintiff is a
23 qualified disabled person for purposes of § 308(a) of the ADA who is being subjected
24 to discrimination on the basis of disability in violation of Title III and who has
25 reasonable grounds for believing he will be subjected to such discrimination each time
26 that he may attempt to use the property and premises.

27 **PRAYER**
28

1 WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays that this court award damages and provide relief
2 as follows:

3 1. Issue a preliminary and permanent injunction directing Defendant as current
4 owner, operator, lessor, and/or lessee of the property and premises to modify the
5 above described property and premises and related facilities so that each provides full
6 and equal access to all persons, including but not limited to persons with physical
7 disabilities who use wheelchairs, and issue a preliminary and permanent injunction
8 directing Defendant to provide and maintain facilities usable by plaintiff and similarly
9 situated persons with disabilities, and which provide full and equal access, as required
10 by law, including appropriate changes in policy;

11 2. Retain jurisdiction over the Defendant until such time as the Court is satisfied
12 that Defendant unlawful policies, practices, acts and omissions, and maintenance of
13 inaccessible public facilities as complained of herein no longer occur, and cannot
14 recur;

15 3. Award to Plaintiff all appropriate damages, including but not limited to
16 statutory damages, general damages and treble damages in amounts within the
17 jurisdiction of this Court, all according to proof;

18 4. Award to Plaintiff all reasonable statutory attorney fees, litigation expenses, and
19 costs of this proceeding as provided by law;

20 5. Award to Plaintiff prejudgment interest pursuant to California Civil 17 Code§
21 329

22 6. Grant such other and further relief as this Court may deem just and proper.
23

24 ASCENSION LAW GROUP, PC

25 DATE: February 16, 2023

26 /s/Pamela Tsao

27 Pamela Tsao, attorney for Plaintiff

28 JOHN HO

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VERIFICATION

I, John Ho, the plaintiff in this action, declare under penalty of perjury that I have reviewed the foregoing Verified Complaint. The allegations made therein are based upon personal knowledge known to me to be true and that everything represented here is true and correct. As to those allegations that I do not have personal knowledge of, such allegations are believed to be true based on specified information, documents, or both.

Dated: February 16, 2023

John Ho
Plaintiff